



Sittingbourne's Steam Railway

Registered charity number: 105 7079

Press Release

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2019 Season – 50th Anniversary of Handover

Fifty years ago, this October, paper manufacturer Bowaters, handed over a section of its narrow gauge railway system to the Locomotive Club of Great Britain, and so, over the following few years, the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway was set up to continue the legacy. Next year, will be the 50th anniversary of public trains and 2022 will be the 50th anniversary of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway as a company.

Following a time and motion study, Bowaters Paper Co. decided to transition from rail to road operations throughout Sittingbourne and Kemsley Paper Mills and Ridham Dock. The management did not want to see its railway lost forever so it sought to pass on the mantle for operating the 'main line' to preservationists.

In October 1969, operation of the line between Sittingbourne and Kemsley Paper Mills was handed over to the Locomotive Club of Great Britain, which later set up the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway.

Operating original locomotives, coaches and wagons over the original line is rare in preservation. The paper mill network consisted of 10 miles of sidings and three miles of main line – the two miles from Sittingbourne Exchange Sidings to Kemsley Paper Mill are all that remains of the original main line.

Coincidentally, roadworks within Kemsley Paper Mill will see the occasional lorry movement across the site at Kemsley Down, a stark reminder of the industrial history of the Railway.

Due to the late Easter, trains will start running on Mothering Sunday, 31st March, with trains running every Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday until the end of September. There will also be trains on all four days of Easter and Wednesdays in August.

This season's events include:

- Mother's Day Flowers – 31st March
- Easter Weekend – 19th-22nd April
 - Good Friday Flowers
 - Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday

- Jack the Station Cat Weekend – 5-6th May
- Teddy Bears Picnic – 26-27th May
- Steam & Beer – 6-7th July
- Model Railway Day – 18th August
- Ivor the Engine Weekend – 25-26th August
- Gala Weekend – 28-29th September.

Steam locomotives Leader and Melior will work trains this year, both are original to the Railway, Leader being the oldest (introduced in 1905), as are many of the coaches and wagons.

Generally, trains depart Sittingbourne Viaduct station hourly 1-4pm, with extra trains at 11am and midday on event days and Sundays in August.

The return fares for 2019 are:

- Adults - £7
- Concessions - £6
- Child (aged 3-15) - £3.50
- Under 3s go free
- Family (2 adults and up to 4 children) - £20

Special fares and timetable apply for Steam & Beer. Other fares are available, such as single tickets, to enable passengers to walk one way via Milton Creek Country Park and the Saxon Shore Way.

For more information visit www.sklr.net, email info@sklr.net or call 01795 424899.



Figure 1 - Triumph re-enacting handover day at Sittingbourne Viaduct in 2008 - [download the image here.](#)

(End)

Information for the media:

1. The SKLR is now the longest continuous operator of the railway which is operated and maintained entirely by volunteers.

2. Postal address: SKLR, PO Box 300, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2DZ.
3. Photographs of the Railway can be found on the Press Officer's Flickr account www.flickr.com/stopem Feel free to use them without a fee but please credit 'www.sklr.net'.
4. Press releases can be downloaded from the Railway's website:
<http://www.sklr.net/latest-news/press-releases/>
5. The Press Officer is available for interviews and recording sessions at the Railway or studios. Other members may be requested for interview through the Press Officer.

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